E STORY OF THE STOLEN IDOL: By George Barton.

reeks with an attack of his old emy, rheumatic gout. He was now, and Clancy called with some papers that needed immediate at-The hum of the busy life of New York came through the window and made the old man long to get sack into harness again. He lolled back in his chair, crunched an unlightsi stogle between his teeth and gazed replexedly at a newspaper clipping in his right hand. Clancy, compiling departmental reports at an adjoining tahe had one eye on his work and the other on his chief. Clancy's natural love of adventure made him hope that the puzzling paper might bring some relier from the deadly monotony of routine which had brooded over the of-

relief from the description of the open continuous which had brooded over the offered for a fortnight.

Presently the perplexity faded from the eyes of the older man and he looked at his assistant with an induigent smile. Bancy returned the smile with interest and waited for an explanation. Barnes silestly handed him the newspaper dipping, which read as follows:

"The larceny of an idol is the latest bit of sensationalism. The curlous indent occurred at the Chinese exposition at Coney Island. Ten days ago the customs officials at this port, by authority of a special act of Congress, admitted into the United States a company of Chinese players who are to give performances in their native tongue daring the continuance of the exposition and after its close return to their native Chine. One of the articles in performances in their advances of the exposition and after its close return to their homes in China. One of the articles in their baggage was a Chinese idol, which, being an article of religious worship, was admitted free of duty and was duly installed in a temporary joss house erected on the exposition grounds for the purpose. Early yesterday morning the idol disappeared from its pedestal in the joss house, and when this became known to the members of the company they were almost frantic with grief and anger, Their weird lamentations filled the grounds. Two hours later the idol was found unharmed in its original position. The mystery is why it was taken at all, and who was was taken at all, and who was

The young man read the paragraph and was about to inquire at possible interest it could have for United States government, when his spoken question was cut off by the ef, who had already mentally out-

met, who had a campaign, "Con," he asked, with a smile hov-ring about the corners of his mouth, 'are you a student of the drama?"

"Yes," was the half hesitating reply. I enjoy a show as well as the next fel-ow, but when it comes to these heath-

The brisk laugh of Barnes drowned nediately afterward he became the offi-

We'll go down this afternoon and look at this heathen show take a look at this heathen show."

At 2 o'clock, when the chief and his assistant were installed in front seats in the little theater on the Midway of the exposition grounds, Barnes was his ordinarily agreeable self, happy to discard temporarily the straitfacket of officialdom. For more than two hours the semingly interminable performance went on. For a time the noise and latter and strangeness interested. ance went on. For a time the noise and clatter and strangeness interested clancy, but after that he began to fidget and glance at his watch. Not so the chief inspector. He looked intently at the actors and frequently questioned Ab Sin, the obliging interpreter, who had been provided for his benefit. A lainty Chinese girl, emerging from the cloom back of the stage, trotted down oward the footlights to the waird see stoom back of the stage, trotted down toward the footlights to the weird accompaniment of the tom toms, and gracefully sinking to the floor, skilfully shot open her fan in the direction of the audience. An instant took of recognition overspread the face of the chief inspector. He turned to the interpreter.

"Who is that?"
"That's Ching Moy." was the re-

"She seems to be a favorite."
"Oh, yes," replied Ah Sin proudly;
"she leading lady allee samee,"
The play was a tragedy—perhaps that
is why it furnished so much unalloyed
loy to the Americans in the audience.
The Chinamen among the speciators by to the Americans in the audience. The Chinamen among the spectators looked on in atolid silence and with unwhaking patience. During a lull in the performance the chief, with a yawn of islaxation, turned to his assistant.

"What do you think of 'em?"
Con glanced apploantly.

"They look like tea chests and smell like the very".

Barnes raised a protesting finger. But Clancy was in one of his argumenta: the moods.

'A Chinaman's a Chinaman. Whatta A Chibaman's a Chibaman. Whatte we want with 'em? They'll open laun-dries ruin our shirts, put a lot of hon-est widders out of business, live on rice and burn tissue paper in the grave-lards."

and burn tissue paper in the grave-yards."

The chief, maintaining his gravity, said with a sober face:

But these are artists: they'll go heme after the exposition."

Clancy shook his head disconsolately. "Oh, a Chinaman's an artist, all right, but I never know'd any of 'em to go back to China-anyhow, not till they got a bundle of our good money to take with 'em."

The villain of the piay—the Irishman iasisted that they were all villains—was tall, stern and forbidding in appearance, and, as Clancy described him in the vernacular, "a dead ringer for Li Hung Chang." Lew Pung, the villainous one, was impressed with the seriousness of his part and was merciless in his treatment of the hero, a small, dellicate looking Chinaman by the name of Woo Tong. Both played incessant court to the heroine, impersonated by the frasile little maiden who was billed as pachlow vase and so artless that the pressie Barnes unconsciously found kinself sympathizing with Lew Pang she that oriental finally discovered after many wonderfully long drawn as paches, that his suit was hope-last posted unstituted and the last scene the playwright sat-

sit speeches, that his suit was hopese.

In the last scene the playwright satice poetic justice and the evident destrot the audience by betrothing Wooforg and Ching Moy. After that, of
ourse, in just compliance with the
strothest process of compliance in a fearfully
strothest process of constructed dialogue,
strothest process of which Lew Pang stealthstrothest pulled out a pistol looking like a
strothest pulled
stroth

ARNES had been laid up in his landed them in a low, one-story wooden building, which served as a dining room of the Chinese artists. The membuilding, which served as a dining room of the Chinese artists. The members of the troupe were already seated around a long, wooden table, drinking tea and chattering away like magples. Barnes, intent on his secret quest, noticed that Lew Pang, the stage villain; Woo Tong, the colorless hero, and his beloved, the heroine of the drama, sat at the head of the board intent upon one another and oblivious of their surroundings. Ten other Chinamen were there, five on either side of the table. All had smooth, yellow faces, triangular eyes, glistening white teeth, expressionless countenances and a gravity of demeanor that was terribly depressing. The face an manner of each one of them, the blue cotton blouses, the white drawers, the heavy wooden shoes with their brocaded uppers, and the long shining, plaited pigtails, were so precisely alike that a bibulous spectator might have been pardoned for believing he was seeing the same men ten times over.

When Barnes' identity became known the clattering conversation ceased with nerve racking suddenness. The Mongolians were all very reverent in the presence of the representative of the Unitd States goverment. The interpreter, who gloated over his work, insisted upon presenting the chief to the actors. He began with the fond parent in the drama, who bowed low to Barnes and gave vent to a series of shrill ejacuations lasting for half a minute.

"He say," remarked the interpreter, blandly, "he velly glad to see you."

"It's fortunate," whispered Clancy to Barnes, "he didn't wish ye the compliments of the season. He'd be talking yet." When Barnes' identity became known

ments of the season. He'd be taking yet."

Barnes noticed that the girl at the head of the table was in high spirits, but saw that the men on either side of her, the villain and the hero, were alternately raised to the highest heights of hopes or plunged into the deepest depths of despair. The sight of her childish face, framed in a mass of coal black hair, melted the antagonistic heart of Clancy, and he muttered some familiar quotation about a rose beblack hair, melted the antagonistic heart of Clancy, and he muttered some familiar quotation about a rose between two thorns. But to Barnes she looked more like a doll, a piay toy, than a flower. The pinkish cheeks against the tawny skin, the tiny dots of eyes peering out of the heavy lids, under the arched brows; the waxen ears, like the most delicate of shells; the flat nose, the small, straight mouth with the bloodred lips, all helped the illusion. A pearl comb was thrust carelessly into a glistening coil of her jet black hair. She wore the costume that had done service in the play, a richly trimmed garment with a gracefully draped train. The light blue waist was kimono shaped and the large flowing sleeves contrasted oddly with her small hands, which seemed altogether too dainty and transparent to be real.

She held a rose coquettishly in the doll-like fingers, and the two men

parent to be real.

She held a rose coquettishly in the doll-like fingers, and the two men struggled for it with a pretence at boyishness which was belied by the glitter in their usually dull, filmy eyes, Lew Pang whispered very earnestly to her, but she answered with an indifferent shrug and a laugh. His face hardened, and jumping up with an angry gesture, he strode from the room. After that the coal black head of Ching Moy and the shaven crown of Woo Tong got very close together. Presently there was a flutter in the room. One of the stolid faced Chinamen on the side of the table made a discovery. The little god of love, hovering above them—or was it Woo Tong?—had softly dropped something on the table. It was exquisitely simple. A paper dragon was before the Tong?—had softly dropped something on the table. It was exquisitely simple. A paper dragon was before the man and a paper phoenix in front of the woman. They were sewed together with two pieces of red silk. Every one in the room—except Barnes and Clancy—recognized the meaning of the ancient symbols. Woo Tong and Ching Moy were betrothed! All were happer over this beautiful bit of imagery, and no one gave any thought to the absent Lew Pang, thus worsted by his rival in real life, as he had repeatedly been on the mimic stage.

Nothing would do but that Barnes

Nothing would do but that Barnes should stay for the evening performance and then participate in a genuine ance and then participate in a genuine Chinese dinner to celebrate the real engagement of the hero and heroine, a consummation which had been eagerly looked for by the members of the company, who had participated in the stage affair so many hundreds of times. Clancy threw out a hint about going home, but the positiveness with which Barnes said "We're going to stay" convinced the young man that the veteran had something up his sleeve, and that he, too, would be compelled to remain and see the game to the end.

compelled to remain and see the game to the end.

Barnes conversed with the Chinamen and gradually led up to the disappearance of the Idol, and showed the newspaper clipping to the interpreter. That person became interested at once, and amid a wealth of detail told what he knew of the occurrence which had mystified the colony so much. He said the idol had disappeared not once, but several times. Barnes asked where it had come from in the first place. Lew Pang, who had originally procured the Joss for the company in China, was not present, so the query could not be answered. While the interpreter was talking, Ching Moy watched the Americans intently from the depths of her beady little eyes. After Ah Sin finished his story, Barnes fell into one of his characteristic reveries, from which he was aroused by a plucking at his coat sleeves. He looked around and saw Ching Moy beckoning to him with a half mocking smile. She walked out of the room and he followed her. Once outside she pursed up her ruby lips and genuffecting reverently, spread her flowing sleeves until they looked like the outstretched wings of a heautiful bird.

"Do custom house man want to find out about Chinese joss?" she said, pronouncing each word quickly and sharply,

pronouncing each word quickly and sharply, He nodded eagerly. She pointed to the temple, a few yards away and began to walk in that direction. Barnes halted. "Ching Moy," he said, "I've seen you before."

before,"
She looked up exultant and bobbed her head in assent.
"On the wharf on the day you arrived in this country."
She laughed with glee at his wonderful memory,
"You were trying to tell me something that day; what was it?"
For a moment the tiny face was a blank—the next moment she burst forth in a frantic effort to be understood.

stood,
"Yes, yes; Ching Moy she love Woo
Tong velly much!"
"Well," said the chief, with his in-

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"No, no," she cried in protest, "no allee lisht. Lew Pang he want Ching Moy. He take Ching Moy back to China and mally her."
"But," said Barnes cheerily, "I suppose Ching Moy will have something to say about that?"
She shook her head sadly.
"Lew Pang velly bad man; he make Ching Moy mally him; he hurt Woo Tong."

The chief put a reassuring hand on

'Not in this country," he said soothingly She sighed, a sigh of relief and a

She sighed, a sigh of relief and a sigh of bliss,
"Oh, Ching Moy love Woo Tong velly much;" "Tell me about the joss," he said peremptorily, coming back to the business in hand.

"Can Ching Moy love Woo Tong velly much?" she asked guardedly.
"Certainly," and the chief loughed at the graciousness of his permission.
"No one hurt Woo Tong?"
"No, no!" was the now impatient reply.

Custom house man put Lew Pang "If he gets half a chance." This

If he gets half a chance." This with vehemence.

This promise appeared to satisfy the girl, for she silently tiptord in the direction of the joss house. The exposition grounds were almost deserted. The afternoon crowds had departed, and it wanted nearly an hour before the evening visitors would arrive. The door of the rude temple was closed, but the girl soon effected an entrance, and the customs inspector quickly followed her into the dimly lighted room. There was something weird about the barren interior. The hideous statue stood in state on its rough pedestal, glaring at them with glassy eyes and an insufferable smile. It sat with legal crossed, tallor fashian, and a pair of wooden hands were complacently folded across an abnormally fat stomach. Once it looked as if the thing were sneering at them, but the illusion was probably caused by a ray of the setting sun that penetrated a chink in the doorway.

probably caused by a ray of the setting sun that penetrated a chink in the doorway.

Barnes' bump of fear was not strongly developed, but he felt for a moment as if this invasion were half a mistake. His natural caution told him that if he were detected by the Chinamen, their outraged feelings might prompt them to swift vengoance. But a sense of his duty to the government loomed up vividly before him, and he advanced without hesitation. The girl, half hysterical over the sacrilege and half gleeful in the thought of her powerful ally, was pointing to the floor of the temple. The man could see nothing. She raised the wick of the smouldering lamp, and the ghostly light revealed a soft white covering over the earthen surface. Still puzzled, he looked at her for a further explanation, Her answer was to point silently to a small closely woven sieve in the corner of the room.

The explanation flashed on him in an instant.

small closely woven sieve in the corner of the room.

The explanation flashed on him in an instant. A portion of the floor had been sifted over carefully with a covering of fine white flour. Designedly she had led him about the extreme edge of the room without disturbing the stuff. He adjusted his glasses, and, leaning over, inspected the soft mantle. In the center, leading up to the idol, was a series of distinct foot-prints. A second and closer inspection satisfied him that the impressions had been made by a pair of wooden soled shoes such as are commonly worn by Chinamen. The tracks reversed themselves after a while and showed where the man had left the building.

"You sprinkled the flour here?" he exclaimed, grasping the girl's wrist. She nodded her head, her doll-like face glowing with feverish excitement. "When?"

"Last night."

"Last night."

"Last night."

"A woman's wit," he muttered.

The next moment he was on the outside, following the white footprints with the eagerness of a bloodhound. They led toward the main living room of the troupe, and then suddenly branched off and finally ended in front of a low one story frame structure in of a low, one story frame structure in

the rear.

He turned quickly.

"Whose room is this?"
A look of fear came to her baby face and she was silent.

"Tell me," commanded the chief. "No harm shall come to you."

"Lew Pang!" she exclaimed, throwing discretion to the winds.

"Ah!" ejaculated Barnes, and there was satisfaction and triumph in the brief word.

"Ah!" ejaculated Barnes, and there was satisfaction and triumph in the brief word.

He made no bones about breaking through the frail doorway, which readily yielded to his strong arms. At this she gave a little shriek and ran away with her face buried in her hands. He paid no further attention to the girl, but got down to work at once. A chest stood in the corner of the room. It was the work of a minute to pry open the lid with a chisel which lay near by. A lot of old clothes greeted his gaze. He tossed them aside and dug to the bottom of the chest. Presently his hand struck a hard substance. He reached down and brought up a square shaped mat containing a sticky material. Beneath it he found a half dozen similar packages. He arose from his knees, his face glowing.

"Opium! At last!"

In an incredibly short time he had thrust everything back into the chest and closed and fastened it. He hastened toward the large building. Clancy was on the doorsteps, curiosity and wonder in his face.

"Con!" shouted the chief, beckoning

in his face,
"Con!" shouted the chief, beckoning Clancy responded without question.
The two men hastened to the temple.
Barnes entered first. He turned to

"Guard that door with your life, We've only got a short time. I must not be interrupted."

The light was bad, but it answered. The chief pulled the lid down. It was made of rattan and was light in weight. The base was heavier than the other portion. Barnes irreverently turned it upside down. The bottom was screwed on in wasters with the control of th portion. Barnes irreverently turned it upside down. The bottom was screwed on in a workmanlike manner. With the adeptness of a cabinetmaker the chief got to work. The screws moved easily. They had evidently been in and out before. In a few minutes the bottom came off and out of the cavity there rolled numberless small mats. Clancy's mouth distended in frank amazement. He deserted his post for.

"What is it?" he gasped in an awed whisper,
"Opium," replied Barnes calmly,
"Hundreds of dollars' worth—probably thousands.'

'And it's' Yes," sa "Yes," said the chief ironically, answering the question before it had been fully framed. "It's all been smuggled into the port before our very eyes."

"By Lew Pang-your villainous friend of the play."

friend of the play."

"What are you going to do with it?"

"We'll close it up for the present," said Barnes blandly, and, suiting the action to the word, he screwed the bottom on again and placed the idol on its pedestal in its former position. The next moment they had closed the door and were on the outside of the temple. Their exit was in the nick of time, for it was dusk and the exposition grounds were beginning to fill up. Barnes paused to think for a moment and then said;

"Get in communication with the inspectors at once; have men sent out here to watch both the joss house and Lew Pang's shack, and wait until I give the word and then seize the smuggled stuff and arrest the men."

Within a few minutes the orders had been put into effect. After that Clancy looked up into Barnes' face so appealingly that he could not withhold the explanation.

Con, my boy, that little news Item this morning's paper kept sticking in

"Why?"
"Well, it was so puzzling. Why should any one want to steal a Chinese idol, and, having stolen it, why should it be replaced? There were two probable explanations; the first was that it might have been a lark on the part of some college students. The second was some deeper and more serious reason. Almost instantly I rejected the notion of a boyish prank, and in the next thought my mind said opium." The nationality and the drug are almost inseparable. A lot of smuggled opium any one want to steal a Chinese idol, and, having stolen it, why should it be replaced? There were two probable explanations: the first was that it might have been a lark on the part of some college students. The second was some deeper and more serious reason. Almost instantly I rejected the notion of a boyish prank, and in the next thought my mind said 'oplum.' The nationality and the drug are almost inseparable. A lot of smuggled oplum has found its way into the local market. How? All of the incoming ships have been closely watched. What more natural than that the stolen idol should come under suspicion? Once out here the fear and the gullelessness of the girl made the solution easy. Ching Moy has been in love with Woo Tong for a long while, but through fear of Lew Pang did not declare herself. My nave been closely watched. What more natural than that the stolen idol should come under susplcion? Once out here the fear and the guilelessness of the girl made the solution easy. Ching Moy has been in love with Woo Tong for a long while, but through fear of Lew Pang did not declare herself. My presence gave her the courage to do so a little while ago.

presence gave her the courage to do so a little while ago.

"After that her desire was to be rid of Lew Pang, to give him into the hands of the authorities, where he could not disturb her in her new found bliss. She suspected the fellow of being a smuggler, and had proved it by the scheme of the sifted flour in order to entrap him. His methods have been wary. He feared to dispose of all the opium at once. That might have aroused suspicion and caused his arrest. So he took it out a little at a time, and was selling it by degrees. He feared discovery while abstracting it from the idol, so he boildly carried the statue to his room, where he could work on a little at a statue to his room, where he could work on a little at a little

"Get in communication with the inspectors at once; have men sent out the rere to watch both the joss house and Lew Pang's shack, and wait until I give the word and then selze the smuggled stuff and arrest the men."

Within a few minutes the orders had.

"Within a few minutes the orders had." off to the city disposing of his illgotten stuff.

Will we lock him up when he returns?'

The chief rubbed his chin reflectively.

"I think I'll let him finish the evening performance. After that he'll go to the temple to take his regular supply of opium. I'd like to get him with the goods."

At this point Ching Moy came run-

after the evening performance. It in-cluded such delicacles as pincapple, dried nuts, ginger, melon seeds, spiced fish, bird's nests with chicken, colong

A call from the prompter carrie Ching Moy off to the theater. For more than two hours the tedious drama was played for the benefit of a curious and tortured public. At the end of that time Ching Moy, fatigued but happy, having rejected Lew Pang for the twenty-first time, scampered off the boards, and, making her way to the long diningroom, deftly put the finishing touches on the well prepared feast. Lew Pang and Woo Tong remained in the theater for the concluding scene of the drama, wherein the villain by the aid of his blank cartridge snuffs out the life of the hero. Ching Moy relighted all of the candles, rearranged some of the decorations with nervous fingers, and then with a sigh of impatience sat down at the head of the table, with one pink and yellow cheek resting on her babyish hands and her beady eyes fastened on the paper dragon and the paper phoenix. The crack of a pistol shot rang out sharp and crisp, like the breaking of a joint. Ching Moy sprang to her feat, the joy of expectancy banishing her restlessness.

"At last," she breathed, "allee ovel call from the prompter carriedright hand in her two tiny ones and said piteously:
"Tell me, can Lew Pang hurt Woo

Tong any more?

Tong any more?"

He wheeled around, and, looking her squarely in the face, said, deliberately:
"No, Ching Moy; Lew Pang will never hurt Woo Tong any more."

The childish smile returned; a look of cunning shone from the beady eyes.
"Lew Pang smuggle; custom house man put him in prison; Ching Moy go back to China with Woo Tong."

Barnes nodded absently and walked away. Clancy followed closely. He looked at the chief.
"Did you get Lew Pang?"

'Did you get Lew Pang?"
'Yes; he's gone off in that police pu-

"It won't be hard to prove the charge of smuggling in this case," was Clan-cy's admiring comment.

"The charge will have to be chang-ed" and Research.

said Barnes, with a grave significance of tone. "To what?"

"To murder!" Clancy started. The absence of Woo Tong, the pistol shot and the meaning of the ambulance dawned on him.

"Did Tong die?" "Instantly." said the chief.

Clancy felt a troublesome lump in his throat

"Why didn't you tell her?" he gulped.
The chief turned and for reply pointed to the room they had left. The lights shone through all the windows. The shone through all the windows. The interior was radiant with warmth and comfort. Ching Moy sat at the head of the table—alone. The paper dragon and the paper phoenix were before her, and she lifted them up by means of the two strands of red silk and, tossing back her doll babyish head, surveyed the childish pledge of her love with a look of inertable bliss.

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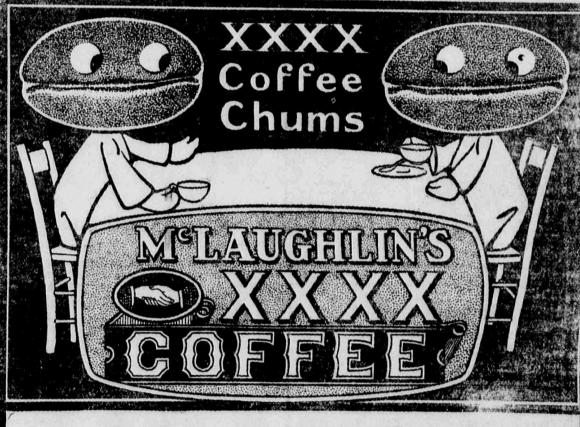
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"At last," she breathed, "allee ovel now; Woo Tong come to Ching Moy." The caterer standing in the doorway caught the look of command from her eager eye, and his string of attendants began carrying in the delicacies. Barnes at that moment was attracted by

at that moment was attracted by a commotion in the theater. He turned

commotion in the theater. He turned to Clancy.

"Tell the men to seize the opium—idol and all. I'll be with you in a minute."
He hurried into the playhouse, while Clancy carried out his orders to the letter. As he concluded he saw an ambulance and a police patrol wagon simultaneously driving away from the theater. Barnes emerged a moment later, uncommonly flushed and agitated.

Ching Moy, coming to the door of the diningroom, gave a coquettish whirl of

liningroom, gave a coquettish whirl of her little fan.
"Custom house man take dinner with
Ching Moy?"

He averted his head before replying. "Sorry, but I haven't time; must go to the office at once."

A premonition of trouble chased the

joy from her eyes. She took his big

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BOUND TO BRING ADVANCED PRICES. Our trees are grown by ourselves at Provo, Utah, and are the finest that can be grown; large, thrifty roots and from six to eight feet high. WE GUARANTEE them to please. You

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